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**United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East**

## Letter dated 7 November 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Enclosed please find Israel's response to the report submitted by Karen Koning AbuZayd, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which Israel views with concern (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could arrange for the present letter and its annex to be circulated as a document of the Fourth Committee, under agenda item 30.

(*Signed*) Dan **Gillerman**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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## Annex to the letter dated 7 November 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

## Response of the Government of Israel to the report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for the period from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005

At the outset, Israel offers its warmest wishes to the newly appointed Commissioner-General, Karen Koning AbuZayd, and is looking forward in keen anticipation to an improved dialogue and working relationship with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Israel has closely studied the report of the Commissioner-General to the General Assembly for the period from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005 (A/60/13) and would like to present the following comments.

Israel appreciates and reaffirms its support for the humanitarian work being carried out by UNRWA, other international organizations and many non-governmental organizations. Israel is very aware of the difficulties faced by UNRWA in the implementation of its necessary and important humanitarian work. However, in the report there is little understanding expressed as to the genuine and legitimate security needs of Israel faced with ongoing Palestinian terror. Moreover the report gives scant recognition to the day-to-day facilitation and assistance to UNRWA activities during the most adverse of circumstances.

Such facilitation is not limited to seeking solutions to existing problems on the ground but also aims at addressing potential future difficulties with a view to finding solutions, through full and transparent cooperation with relevant international organizations, including UNRWA. During the reporting period, as Israel's disengagement from Gaza and areas in the West Bank was in its preparatory phase, Israeli civilian and military authorities established coordinated working mechanisms with senior representatives of the international community including humanitarian aid agencies and donor project implementers. These mechanisms established modalities for operational preparedness and coordination to enable the necessary steps to be taken to maximize and maintain the capabilities of the parties during the implementation of the disengagement. Indeed these joint mechanisms proved to be most successful during the disengagement when, despite the operation being of unprecedented complexity and scale, no special humanitarian problems were reported.

Unfortunately, the report describes at great length and detail obstacles to its operations, allegedly caused by Israel, but fails to present the overall operational security context and thus presents a distorted picture of the actual reality on the ground. In fact, Israeli authorities successfully enabled the operational continuity of UNRWA operations in the field, both during times of routine and in periods of heightened operational activities. Israel took such measures despite the deliberate targeting of humanitarian infrastructure and passages by Palestinian terrorists,

turning them into war-zones. A particular example of this is the terrorist attack in January 2005 at the Karni crossing, the main passage for humanitarian and commercial activity of the Gaza Strip, in which six Israeli civilians were killed. Despite the fact that Palestinian terrorists continued to target such facilities, Israeli authorities were able to resume operations at Karni expeditiously. It seems that the report is more interested in focusing on administrative and technical constraints without giving due appreciation to very real and imminent security dilemmas faced by Israel.

The report details Israeli military activities that impinge on UNRWA in a way that gives the impression that such activities were carried out arbitrarily rather than in response to Palestinian terror. An example is the reference to damage by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to a Jabalia school on 30 September 2004. The report mentions heavy fighting but fails to mention that on the said date Palestinians launched a rocket-propelled grenade from within the Jabalia school at IDF forces. Nor is this flagrant incursion into an UNRWA installation mentioned in the section of the report that deals with armed interference by Palestinian authorities. Israel regrets the abuse of UNRWA installations by Palestinian terrorist groups and expects that UNRWA will take all possible steps to ensure such abuse is not repeated.

Mentions are made in the report of delays at checkpoints yet it also makes no reference to the security issues that necessitate checkpoints as part of Israel's fight against terrorism in general and against suicide bombers in particular. One example that illustrates the problems Israel faces is the incident on 21 June 2005, in which a Palestinian woman, wearing an explosive belt she attempted to detonate, was apprehended at the Erez checkpoint, the main passage for Palestinians and international personnel between Gaza and Israel. The woman later admitted her intention to carry out a suicide attack in an Israeli hospital utilizing a permit granted to her to enter Israel to receive medical treatment.

Israel welcomes the promotion of tolerance and conflict resolution training in UNRWA schools and trusts that such programmes will demonstrate the overriding importance of solving the Israel-Palestinian conflict through peaceful means and the rejection of terror that is so widespread among significant portions of the Palestinian population. This is of particular importance in the post-disengagement period, which affords a unique opportunity to solve peacefully all outstanding issues between Israel and the Palestinians.

Israeli officials, from the senior level downward, have been continuously available to meet and coordinate matters with UNRWA officials regarding both general and practical issues arising out of UNRWA operations. For example, Israeli coordination officials continuously facilitate the movements of patients in need of urgent or chronic medical treatment to hospitals in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and in Israel, the movement of medical personnel and ambulances, and the replenishing of vital medical equipment and supplies. Israel remains committed to such coordination even in times of increased security alert and widespread military activity, which can impose great difficulties on such coordination efforts.

**Summary**

Israel remains fully committed to its obligations to facilitate the humanitarian activities of UNRWA and will continue to assist in solving any difficulties in order to facilitate the work of UNRWA. Israel remains hopeful that UNRWA will seek ways to operate within the terms of its mandate and continue its humanitarian mission with due regard and sensitivity to the difficult security situation on the ground. The Government of Israel welcomes the humanitarian assistance granted by UNRWA and expects due consideration on the part of the Agency for Israel's security constraints.